

Social Service PILOT and Comparative Impact Study Committee
Conference Room 2 7:30 PM Memorial Building Framingham, Ma

Minutes

March 28, 2006

Note: If a word or sentence is blue and underlined click for the link.

Note: A tape recording of these minutes is available upon request

Attendance: Bob Berman, Yaakov Cohn, Dawn Harkness, Cynthia Laurora., Laurie Lee, Wes Ritchie, Nick Sanchez, Steve Orr, Jim Palmer absent; John Speranza,

Bob Berman called the meeting to order at 7:30 PM and introduced our guest Fire Chef Ollie Gadson.

Chief Gadson said that he is here to discuss how some of the agencies have impacted the fire department and his ability to serve the public. He wanted it said up front that he doesn't typically look at types or relationships of particular agencies and how it impacts the town. Usually he looks at types of incidents. They respond to.

It was difficult to come up with this data.

He also stated that it is difficult to analyze from a professional point of view as to the impact of SS programs on the fire department because he serves a number of different factions in town: elderly, poor, minorities....all are treated the same. They don't care if they are Framingham residents or passing through Framingham.. it has no bearing on the fire departments treatment of any particular situation. If they are called, they respond with the highest level of care regardless of where the individual comes from or what their situation is.

Laurie asked if the data for the addresses is for one year. The Chief said yes, 2005.

Jim noticed certain addresses with excessive calls. Is there any type of follow up because of that?

The Chief said that the only follow up they do is if there are calls regarding a particular address, particular person or particular issue. That might be because of mental health issues or health issues, where someone is in need of additional services. Such as assistance in daily routines. He would then seek help for that additional so they respond to emergency situations.

The chief noted the Memorial House, which is a town building with assisted living. Or the hospital. They are probably calls for fire alarms or medical attention. The elderly are certainly in need of the services.

The fire also responds with the ambulance.

Nick asked what the yearly number of calls per year is.

The chief said that for 2005 they responded to 9,474 calls. From 50-60% of their calls are EMS, medical, calls.

The police also respond to medical calls unless they have a major incident or not enough officers covering the town.

Dawn said that we asked for the addresses of the top 200 addresses they respond to. Have you collected the data for us?

The Chief said No, although the data may be here, it wasn't sorted for the top 200 addresses. This is from the addresses given them.

Dawn said that the data singles out SSA. She also wants to know the top 200 addresses. Do SSA residences have that many more calls than other locations: stores, bars, clubs.. the mall.. have high rates of responses as well.

The Chief said that the fire department was given addresses and based on that they responded back the number of runs.

Dawn said they were also given the questionnaire the committee asked you to fill it out: it seems that somewhere along the line someone asked you to forget the questionnaire and focus on the addresses. Not comparing it to the rest of the town, Dawn asked if this is correct.

Chief Gadson suggested she ask the members of the committee.
Bob asked if it is possible to get that data.
He agreed.

Dawn followed up, of all the calls in Framingham over the last year, how many fatalities did the dept. have?

The Chief said he doesn't have that information.

Dawn said that she is aware of one: the woman who died in a trucking container.

The Chief said this is his first anniversary of being Chief and to his knowledge that is the only fire death that he is aware of.

Cynthia said that she saw a lot of other addresses that had high numbers of calls. She asked if staffing levels have changed.

He said the staffing primarily for fire force, on the street, has not changed since 1993. They have a minimum manning of 30 men. The call volume has increased, but not the manpower.

Dawn asked if there are women on the force.
The chief said they do have one.

Cynthia asked if he can explain the fire box on the building.
Chief said that it is a master box and is not a requirement. Certain occupancies are required to have a monitoring system to alert people of fire. He strives to have that

notification come directly to the fire department. That is what the master box does. Then there is a direct connection and they can respond faster.
They try to sell that to the private sector.

Cynthia asked about fees for false alarms.
For the master boxes: 1-3 no charge 3-6 \$100 6-11 \$200 over 11 each is \$300
This is for everyone, although some properties are exempt like schools and town buildings.

Steve asked if this was a bylaw change. The chief said yes.

Dawn asked how much fees were collected last year.
The chief said \$203, 000 including permits. \$77, 000 were for permits.

Jim said that the boxes are connected to the internal alarms and this also provides the fire department to get into the building.
He complimented the department.

Bob asked if fees that are the result of new building smoke detector tests, are the fees the same for all people? Will the SSA's pay the same fee?
The chief said yes.
There is no separate fee schedule

Cynthia asked how long the false alarm count lasts. He said annually
There is a \$100 connection fee and \$200 a year to have the service available

Dawn asked if he has a breakdown between fees paid by SSA's and other properties.
No he said.
Do you have a sense if you collect more from SSA or the mall?
He said no. He could try to find out but it is not something they usually do.

Bob asked where the fee goes.
The chief said it goes into the general fund

Nick asked if the fire department has a definition of the downtown area that .
Are the calls to the downtown area greater than the rest of the community?
Is there any section of town where you find the calls are heavy?

The chief said that in his experience, the corridor of route 9, route 126, Waverly, 135 are the highest volume they respond to. To quantify it he would have to look.

Nick asked if this includes Union Ave also.
The chief thought possibly.

Jim said that the police chief gave us a map of how he defines the downtown area, 1 square mile. Do you have that same definition?

The chief said he would have to look at the area. Before he could say..

Jim thought it would be good for us to compare his data with the police.

Steve asked if 126 went past the train tracks. The chief said yes and Irving Street. He added that their station by Hartford street is busy too. He said his runs are where a majority of the people are. Apartments on Route 9, housing for elderly on 126, downtown areas with high density of people. They respond where people are.

Bob asked if they run any programs in conjunction with SSA's.

The Chief said they just run fire prevention education programs in general. At the schools, the senior center, assisted living facilities.

Bob asked if they get calls to go to the prison. He didn't think it was on the list but they go to the prison often.

Cynthia asked how they know it's a false alarm.

The chief said those are mechanical calls fro alarms or smoke detectors. If a child calls 911, that is categorized as something other than a false alarm.

Cynthia asked if most of the calls on the list are false alarms. What is the ratio.

The chief said they are a combination.

Nick asked if he gets grants from outside the community. The chef said they are always looking for grants to buy equipment. They are looking for SCA and safe grant for salaries for teaching fire prevention.

Jim said that a false alarm or a real call still impacts the safety of the fire men and the cost to the department is the same.

He was always taught not to call in false alarms because a fireman may be killed on his way to that.

A call is a call and they all cost the same.

The chief said that you might not be feeling well and call , but question your need for assistance. The chief said that doesn't make it less serious. We don't know what it is when we go. We are prepared to handle any situation I a professional manner.

You call, we go.

Dawn commented that not to minimize the previous point, aren't calls that involve fire more costly and dangerous to the fire department and more dangerous to firefighters than a false alarm?

Chief Gadson said that there have been quite a few calls that have turned out to be false alarms that firefighters have died. One of the tragedies coming to light is the number of

traffic accidents that firefighters are involved in going to false alarms. So it doesn't really matter what the result is: when you go out that door there are a number of factors that kill you just as dead as a fire would.

Dawn asked about 105 Irving Street which only has 16 calls for the year. That property was identified as the only problem property by the police department.

Chief Gadson said that the fire department does not go on every call the police department goes on.

Dawn summed up saying that 105 Irving might be a big deal for the police but it doesn't seem to be a big deal for the fire department.

The chief said that none of the properties they respond to are a big problem.

Steve asked if the department gets a lot of grants.

The chief said that we haven't been as fortunate as some other communities in our ability to get grants. He is frustrated and looking at either having someone write our grants or sending firemen out to take a grant writing course.

He did not think town policy was involved.

Steve asked if he has been hampered by not being able to get grants with hooks.

The chief said there were a few grants that he doesn't apply for because of that.

Lloyd Kaye asked if there is a pattern of calls.

The chief said young people, children.. the Salem End Road area someone has tampered with the boxes.

The Chief mentioned that they had an arsonist at Edgewater Hills. It was a serious problem., but has since gone away.

Bob asked if FSC had a large number of alarms. Does the State pay a fee?

The chief said No and once they had a problem up there, but it was cleared up.

Nick asked the clerk to clarify one of the addresses.

Cynthia asked about the Hollis Street address and why it was so high. That is probably pink papered

The chief said this address is a social program where they get a lot of people who need to be transported to the hospital.

Dawn clarified that pink papers means voluntary or involuntary committal.

The Chief thanked her for that.

Dawn asked what he means by permits. Does that include burning permits? He said there is no charge for burning permits. It includes for smoke detector permits.

Other fees are removing an underground tank, carbon monoxide detector for selling,

Nick asked if they are involved when there is a gas leak.
The chief said they can be called for anything like that or what a homeowner doesn't understand. It might be an investigation.

Laurie asked about the total fires from 2000-2004.
The chief explained that the reporting system is different and it is hard to compare.
He brought some numbers:

total fires

2002	363
2003	433
2004	466
2005	429

Total Runs

2002	8,710
2003	8,531
2004	9,065
2005	9,474

Other communities: he said other factors can affect the comparison: population,
population served

Total Fires 2004

Natick	134
Waltham	204
Brockton	194
Newton	205

Bob asked when all the other communities started using the same recording system?
The Chief said they are all on it now. He showed the report put out by the state and the comparisons.

Bob wanted to clarify that these numbers are apples to apples.

The Chief agreed.

Cynthia asked why is Framingham so high.

The chief said he has had one fire a week. Not big, but fires.

Laurie asked if there is any explanation for these numbers.

The chief said he can't explain it. There are a number of variables.

This morning was an electrical short. The light was blinking for months and they asked the landlord to fix it.

Another one had been smoking and put the cigarette in the trash on the porch.

It goes in spurts

Laurie asked if he did a comparison of the strength of his fire force as well.

He did not, but he would be interested to find out those numbers, in terms of number of firefighters on duty and force strength.

Dawn asked if he has any evidence that there is a relation ship between the increased numbers of fires and the number of SSA in Framingham.

He did not.

Jim asked what changes to his fire department he would make:

The chief said he would like to hire a Fire Protection Engineer. He would be utilized in setting up a fire Protection department to review plans coming in , like Lows.. educational programs. He could come to meetings like this and speak to the issues. That is one position he is looking for this year.

Cynthia asked about an address and he clarified it as the entire apartment complex.

The committee thanked the Chief and said goodbye.

Jim asked Laurie to send the Chief a copy of the police map of downtown.

Minutes postponed: Laurie summarized where we are at

Schedule discussed

Bob addresses the committee. He thought the meeting Thursday night showed there is a huge gap in how people are looking at our meetings, at each other and at the issues. One of the things he would like to do, and he thought it might not be too painful but it might be, is come up with even a short list of what are the things that everybody agrees on: what are the issues that we are looking at that we agree on, what are the data that we have looked at so far that we agree on . Even if it is a short list.. He would love for us to take a crack at this.

He is concerned that we will have two groups working off of two sets of data, asking two separate sets of questions and making two sets of recommendations. If that is how it ends up, it is it. But he would like to take one more crack at us working together and coming to some agreements.

Steve thought there were a few things that had to be said.

Steve said that the statement said on Thursday was based on his anticipation of what was in the report and what was presented was an assembly of facts that was put together by all members of the committee. The facts that got assembled were just facts and no conclusions. Steve Krueger statement was that it is about plausibility . The idea of plausible versus possible is what it was about.

Bob's point about the statement anticipating the presentation was not true. It was about the Draft Report.

What was presented wasn't a draft report and that was a change for the better. One of the problems is that this was called a draft report and this is a collection of reports that we as

a committee collected. He did not realize the motion was calling for a draft report and he apologized for that. He said that we were not coming up with a draft report of the committee, we are just coming up with a big book of documents, which this is. This is a public document now that is titled the PILOT committee draft report. To him it is irrelevant what was presented. He was responding to the report.

Dawn said that he is wrong when he says it is just facts. Look at the map of the SSA properties. That slide was so misleading and demonstrative of the way some have taken data and used.. To say that all the properties on the North and all the properties on the South improved in value by 83%, you don't have an equal distribution of SS agencies on the north and on the south, you have an uneven skewed version, but when you put that in a graph and claim it is a lie. It is misleading, false and outrageous chart.

Bob requested that everybody understand that there is a difference disagreeing with each other and there being a right and wrong. The fact of the matter is , a lot of this is open to interpretation.

\Dawn said it is a conclusion, when people say as the previous speaker did, that there are no conclusions that this is just facts, that is bull. That is misleading. It is simply not true. A conclusion has been made. That SSA properties are dragging down the values of other properties. That is what that chart says.

Bob said there is a difference of opinion here .It doesn't make one side right or wrong. He happens to agree with one side but it doesn't make it right or wrong. It is just looking at it in a different way.

Dawn continued that the entire presentation, the problem with the presentation wasn't... the presentation itself. What slides were going to be produced. What slides were going to be shown to the public. That was in her opinion, the thing to object the most to from the minority slide. That they never got a chance as a committee to go through chart by chart, slide by slide and determine, this is how we want to present this information to the public. That was made by a sub group of this committee. She has a problem with that. And a speaker who spoke that night made it perfectly clear that nobody on the majority side wants to go through the exercise of talking about what that data means. You all have decided to write your report and you made I clear that you don't care about any body else's opinion. That to her was the most important point that was made in the minority presentation.

Jim wanted to read a statement without interruption.

A Statement of Surprise

First of all I was taken by surprise when a DRAFT report was handed out at the end of the March 9, meeting when I was not aware that any working group or others had been given responsibility for preparing such a document.

Secondly I thought that we as a committee had decided that we would take some time and discuss the report at the next meeting. When I was informed that the report was going to be voted on without any input from the committee I almost went into shock.

Many questions are raised when that type of thing occurs, some of which I will pose here.

1. How can you write a draft when the data that you have been asking people for, has not been provided, or for the people that you have invited to make presentations have not had the opportunity to make those presentations?

2. How much information can one leave out of a report before the report has no validity? i.e. Education, Town departments, Fire, Ambulance response, information from the very social service agencies that you are studying, etc.
check the list provided in the majority report.

3. How will the report be put together so that gives a true picture of what is happening in Framingham and not a slanted view that does no one any good?
(Majority or Minority)

4. I don't know who coined the term majority and minority with respect to
This report, but I can say from my prospective for the first time in my life I now
understand the plight of the minority. (That's what you get and like it or leave it)
That is not why I came to serve on this committee and I don't believe that Town Meeting is getting what they asked for from this committee.

4. I realize that individuals have said that the report does nothing but present the facts, and arrives at no conclusions, but there is a proper way to present fact so that by reading a report the reader can arrive at a conclusion based on the fact and not by innuendo.

Example: Between the years 2000 and 2004, 500 legal Polish immigrants moved into a 1 mile square area of the Saxonville section of Framingham.

The crime rate in the Saxonville section of Framingham has increased
by 20% since 2000.

>From the above two statements there are many conclusions that can be reached, however we do not have enough data with just these two statements to draw a conclusion; we need more facts.

5. I hope that everyone on this committee has heard but I am afraid that
they have not; most of the Social Service agencies that are in Framingham
were started by Framingham people because they saw a need that was not being
fulfilled, and they have remained here and are providing a service.
Out of necessity social service agencies must maintain enough funds to make
them a stable Corporation that could carry out the contract if the State
Funds were stopped during the life of the contract.

6. One last comment:

We may not like the expansion of Social Service Agencies but we are all aware that in this day and age they are certainly a necessity, this is the way that the state has decided to provide these services.

Why do people come to Framingham? The services are here.

Why do people come to Framingham or Natick and not Ashland, Sherborn, Southborough, Sudbury or Wayland for hospital services? The hospitals are in Framingham and Natick.

Let's stop all the bickering and finish up the task that was given to us by Town Meeting;

The weather is starting to get good and the yard work and golf are calling.

Lloyd Kaye from the audience said that he has been here a lot of times and doesn't want to be interrupted either.

He found this committee to at certain times to give no respect to the people who came, who were invited, to the social services and other people. It has been agenda driven from the beginning. Before he met anybody here he wrote a letter supporting this committee. He said that the respect that has been given to a number of people that have been invited, he would never treat people the way some people have been treated. That is his opinion. Concerning this summary or report or whatever it is you want to call it, you are saying it is facts. It is not. He made a point concerning his committee, the CDBG. These grants do not have almost nothing to do with this committee, it has zero to do with this committee and he confirmed it today. SO this Framingham ranked 15 out of 15 is wrong. It is zero. The way the federal government weighs how the CDBG gives out has zero to do with non profits in our town. If this committee had simply asked our committee you would have that answer. That is what is the problem. You as a whole have not listened to a number of people who have come and if you had, you wouldn't have run into this problem. Mr. Kaye said that he plans on being at the next selectman meeting and make a big point about this. Because this is a problem. He doesn't want his committee's information bantered about incorrectly. They work too hard. This is his committee. He offered to make a copy of their work. They work too hard to have their information bantered about incorrectly, If the committee asked a question to them it would have solve this problem and a lot of the information in this report would be solved too if you listened to people and actually had a real discussion and taken a couple of weeks and talked it out.

Laurie wanted to respond to the minority statement but in writing.

She responded to Mr. Kaye that when you talk about listening and respect, some of us have worked really hard in this committee and we have gotten no respect. And she thinks they have been unbelievably cooperative, walking the committee through every point, every single thing they have been doing, explain it and go over it.

She commented that Dawn was shaking her head.

Laurie said that she told Bob that it seems like we are at different meetings.

The issue now is how do we move forward?

Laurie continued that she thinks that among us, people need to be respected and not abused, how some of us feel we have been.

We are not in a courtroom, we are only a bunch of volunteers doing the best that we can do.

Laurie had four points that she wanted to make. She added that she would like this to work, she would like us to work together, all to contribute together for the town. But if we are 180 degrees from each other and can't even listen, see or respect each other...

Laurie asked the people who read the minority report 4 things. She asked that this not be answered tonight, but take a full week and come back on April 6 for discussion.

- Please explain what you envision our report to look like and what you consider be our timetable to be
- Please share with us any data you have collected over the course of this study for the full committee to review
- Please review the Draft data, independent from the committee meeting, and come up with a list of what you accept as facts
- Please consider retracting the minority statement read at the March 23 forum. It makes several claims which cannot be supported by facts or the records of our meetings. It also it makes a very serious accusation challenging the integrity of the clerk and other members of the committee.

Dawn said that Laurie acts like there was a fallout only recently. From the very beginning when certain committees decided to go off the action plan and we have it on the tape and it has been discussed in this committee, people said "we didn't know we had to stick to the action plan" and rejected, by vote, that folks had to stay with the action plan. She said Laurie was part of that group that did that. It started with the property committee, people were collecting data that we never asked for. But the P&I committee decided that was important and they had the votes and rammed it through. Dawn said it was one thing after another and this is just the culmination. There is no way that considering the actions of the majority that you can say, "well this is the data that we presented to date" and you all should just pretend the entire last 6 months did not happen. This has been going on for a very long time. IF you feel that your integrity is being questioned it is in part because people, particularly herself, has been challenging her to stick to the action plan. Even when we were a balanced group. TO stick to the action plan and you all refused to do it and you went out and got data on your own and it totally skewed our results. That is why we are stuck with it now.

Laurie said that she answered the question of the P&I group sticking to the action plan several months ago and if she has to send the letter and a report summarizing every meeting we had from 9/13/05-1/3/06 showing how they were following the action plan.

Laurie added that we are not going to get any where if we continue this way. She suggests the minority considers the questions she posed and we start from that point.

Yaakov suggested to Bob that he has to make a decision as to whether he wants to chair a meeting focused on issues or if he wants to foster incriminations.

He believes is has been incriminations and complaints about the majority, we did this and that.

He doesn't agree with anything Dawn has said and they could battle it forever, but it is futile.

Yaakov said he wants to address the issues. He asked them no to put us through any more of this stuff. It is very difficult to deal with.

Dawn wanted to respond and Yaakov suggested Bob assert control instead of allowing a response.

Steve had a couple of points. There is a question of perspective. He commented that they are considering the majority a bunch of radicals, whereas the majority considers themselves to be more centrist. And we see you as being hard core left wing people.. he is trying to say there is a perspective. Both of us need to get around. We need to understand that neither group is what the other group thinks we are. Steve added that Jim's point was outrageous to.

All of us here have some sort of an idea of what is going to be happening. But Jim actually said that there is nothing wrong with the SSA causing problems in Framingham and that we should expect more people to be moving to Framingham to take advantage of the services. That is what Steve heard him say.

There was some confusion.

Bob said that this speaks to Laurie's comments that we are sitting in different meetings Bob did not hear that.

There was discussion about who heard what and what Jim said.

Cynthia said that Jim said that people are coming to Framingham for these services?

Bob said no, he said they are coming for the hospital.

Cynthia asked Jim to read the paragraph:

We may not like the expansion of Social Service Agencies but we are all aware that in this day and age they are certainly a necessity, this is the way that the state has decided to provide these services. Why do people come to Framingham? The services are here.

Why do people come to Framingham or Natick and not Ashland, Sherborn, Southborough, Sudbury or Wayland for hospital services? The hospitals are in Framingham and Natick.

Jim added that Cynthia, Laurie , Bob , Wes and Jim all went to the State House to speak with EOHHS.

What Jim heard at that meeting, and he may not like, is what you have to be to get these grants from the state. You have to be a large stable corporation. This what you must be able to do. Support the grant if the state stops the funding. Jim continued that if people like Mr. O'Neill come in here and say we have to check how much money they have in

the bank, there is a reason for that. They will not get the grants if they don't.. Jim didn't decide the way social services will be. The state decided that is the way they will be serviced. Jim may not like it but he can't do anything about it as a person. That is something for the legislators to do. It has nothing to do with this committee.

Laurie heard something different. She agreed about the stable company but she heard that Mr. Habib said there are 1100 NNSSA in MA. The average one has 10-20 sites. There are larger ones but most are smaller. But he considers some of the smaller ones stable. You don't have to be on the end of 1% in size to be stable.

Laurie asked: What are you using to measure stability? Does it mean that you have to be the largest agency?

Laurie did not think so, you could be small but financially stable.

Jim said that if he had a \$5M grant for 5 years. If at the end of 3 years state funding stops, the organization has to be stable enough to keep that grant going for the remainder of the life of the contract.

You can't fold in the middle even if funding stops.

Bob explained that the state is looking for an organization to continue funding the contract even if the state does not give the funds.

Cynthia said she was at the same meeting and she agrees about the stability: she summed up that the state looks for:

A lockup on the property

Be financially solvent

They award contracts to agencies that are stable

Cynthia said that Steve was saying that people are being placed here by the state because of the services.

They all agreed they hear different things.

Motion to adjourn

Second

Vote: 9 in favor 0 opposed 0 abstain

Laurie Lee

Clerk